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ABSTRACT

Males' and females' conceptions of ideal men and women in relation to their perceptions of sex-role sterotypes and their self-concepts were investigated. The following hypotheses were supported by the results obtained: (1) ideal males and females are seen as more similar than typical males and females ($p<.01$); and (2) one's self-concept is closer to his corresponding sex-role sterotype than to the sex-role ideal; one's ideal self is more similar to the sex-role ideal than to the sex-role stereotype ($p<.01$). The findings showed that individuals are content with neither the sex-roles nor with the relative position of self with respect to the sex-roles as they are perceived to exist at present. (Author)

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Sex-roles and Self-concepts: Real and Ideal

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Numerous studies have shown that males and females agree about the attribution of differing characteristics, or sex-role stereotypes, of men and women (Anastasi & Foley, 1949; McKee & Sherriffs, 1957; and Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman & Broverman, 1968). These consensual beliefs have been repeatedly shown to ascribe a higher social value to masculine than to feminine behaviors (Smith, 1939; Sherriffs & Jarrett, 1953; McKee & Sherriffs, 1959; and Rosenkrantz, et al., 1968). It has also been shown that clinicians' descriptions of a mentally healthy adult closely resembled their characterizations of a healthy male but differed from those of a healthy female (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, in press).

Females are thus seen in a negative light when compared with males, being perceived as warm and kind but basicly incompetent (Broverman, et al., in press). Since competence is such an important factor in living in today's complex world, it would seem that females lacking this important quality would be anxious to acquire it, and "competent" females should strive to incorporate it into the general model of "femininity."

Although males appear to be the favored, competent sex,

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they would also be expected to desire a change in the concept of "masculinity" since it also may be in conflict with individual needs and beliefs (e.g. artistic creativity or conscientious objection).

The present study attempted to discover how men and women conceptualize ideal males and females, in the context of their perceptions of typical males and females and their perceptions of themselves. It was hypothesized that individuals' conceptions of the "ideal male" and the "ideal female" are more similar to one another than are their characterizations of the "typical male" and the "typical female." Both ideal males and ideal females were expected to be seen as possessing similar socially desirable adult traits.

Rosenkrantz, et al. (1968) found that sex-role stereotypes play a major role in shaping a person's self-concept. In the present study, the difference between the effects of sex-role stereotypes and sex-role ideals on individuals' self-concepts was investigated. The second hypothesis was: a) that sex-role stereotypes exert a stronger influence on one's actual self-concept than one's ideals do and b) that sex-role ideals exert a greater influence on the ideal self-concepts than stereotypes do. Although one may desire a change in society, one has to live in the society the way it exists at the present time and, therefore, adjust to its rules.

METHOD

Subjects. The subjects for this study were 110 students at a two-year Community College. Six female protocols were randomly discarded to provide an even number (52) of male and female subjects.

Procedure. A Stereotype Questionnaire consisting of 60 bipolar items was used in this study. It is a shortened form of the questionnaire developed by Rosenkrantz, et al. (1968). Based on the results obtained in their study, Rosenkrantz, et al. (1968) divided the items into stereotypic items (items which 75% of both men and women agreed were more masculine than feminine, or vice versa), differentiating items (items for which the masculinity and femininity responses were found to differ significantly in both the male and female samples), and nondifferentiating items (items which did not produce significant *t* tests between the masculinity and femininity responses in both samples). In each of these three groups, certain items were found to be socially desirable for females (female-valued) and others for males (male-valued). For the present study, 10 items were randomly selected from each of the following six groups:

1) Stereotypic male-valued items;
2) Stereotypic female-valued items;
3) Differentiating male-valued items;
4) Differentiating female-valued items;
5) Nondifferentiating male-valued items; and
6) Nondifferentiating female-valued items

The questionnaire was administered to groups of subjects at the Community College. Subjects were instructed to mark on each scale the extent to which they expected the item to characterize the typical adult male. After completing this task, subjects were told to start over, this time marking each item according to what they expected the typical adult female to be like. Then subjects were asked to go through the same scales a third time, indicating what they themselves were like. Subjects then proceeded to a second booklet (which contained the same 60 items) and, using the same procedure as for the first booklet, indicated what they felt a male, a female, and they themselves should ideally be like. Half of the subjects received the "male" instructions, followed by the "female" instructions, while the other half received the reverse ordering.

Before running any analyses, all 60 items were arranged so that high scores indicated a positive value. A mean composite score was obtained for each subject for his male, female, and self responses for all of the male-valued and female-valued items in each of the three scales (stereotypic, differentiating, and nondifferentiating) under both typical and ideal conditions.

Results

To test the first hypothesis (i.e. that subjects' ideal male and female responses are closer to one another than their real male and female responses) a 2x2x2x2 repeated measures analysis of variance with sex of respondent as the between groups factor and role (male and female), value (male-valued and female-valued),

and condition (typical and ideal) as the repeated measures factors was computed for each of the three scales (stereotypic, differentiating, and nondifferentiating) separately. As expected, the interaction between role (R), value (V), and condition (C) was significant for the stereotypic ($F(1,102) = 15.83$, $p<.01$) and differentiating ($F(1,102) = 15.32$, $p<.01$) scales, but not for the nondifferentiating items. Table 1 shows the means for this interaction for the differentiating scale.

Insert Table 1 about here

As was predicted, the mean ideal male and ideal female responses were significantly closer to one another than were the typical male and typical female responses. The results for the stereotypic scale correspond to those presented for the differentiating scale.

To test the remaining hypothesis, three 3x2x2x2 repeated measures ANOVAs, one for each of the three scales, were computed as above, with self included as a third role. As expected, a significant interaction (CxRxV) was obtained for the stereotypic ($F(2,204) = 10.89$, $p<.01$) and the differentiating ($F(2,204) = 14.43$, $p<.01$) scales but not for the nondifferentiating scale.

Insert Table 2 about here

Upon examination of Table 2, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) The ideal responses were overall more positive than the typical responses (Condition: $F(1,102) = 100.23$, $p<.01$);
2) The real self was perceived between the typical male and typical female;
3) On same-sex-valued items (i.e. male-valued items for males and female-valued items for females), subjects saw themselves as less extreme than the stereotype for their sex;
4) On opposite-sex-valued items, subjects saw themselves as more extreme than the stereotype for their sex;
5) Subjects perceived their own ideal self as more positive than their same-sexed ideal.

Thus, the real self was closer to the perceived stereotypes than to the ideal sex-roles, and the ideal self was closer to the sex-role ideals than to the stereotypes. The pattern obtained for the stereotypic scale was congruent with, but not as clear as, that outlined above for the differentiating scale.

Discussion

The results obtained in this study supported the hypotheses investigated and showed consistently similar patterns for male and female subjects. Both males and females perceived ideal men and women and ideal self as possessing many of the characteristics presently valued for the opposite sex, in addition to same-sex-valued traits. Such a conception of sex-roles would allow both males and females a wider range of permissible behaviors, thus avoiding some of the conflicts that presently exist between one's attributes and desires, on the one hand, and socially appropriate

sex-role behaviors on the other. Females would not have to fear losing their "femininity" due to their competency, and males could be kind and still "masculine."

In conclusion, the findings obtained in the present study showed that individuals are content with neither the sex-roles nor with the relative position of self with respect to the sex-roles as they are perceived to exist at present. The conceived ideal sex-roles showed a shift towards a more flexible sex-typing in which both males and females may possess similar socially desirable traits.

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Table 1

Mean Responses on the Differentiating Scale of the Interaction of Condition with Role and Value

	Condition	
	Typical	Ideal
Value		
Male-valued		
Role		
Male	48.50	51.79
Female	43.99	48.59
Female-valued		
Role		
Male	46.82	52.41
Female	50.60	54.72

Table 2

"Differentiating Scale" Response Pattern

Ranking of Means

	Less Positive				More Positive	
Same-Sex-Valued Items						
	Typical Other	Real Self	Typical Same Sex	Ideal Other	Ideal Same Sex	Ideal Self
Opposite-Sex-Valued Items						
	Typical Same Sex	Real Self	Typical Other	Ideal Same Sex	Ideal Self	Ideal Other